



MISSOURI HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY
BRIDGES TO SUCCESS



Geography and Access: Rural Student College Enrollment

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Agenda

- An Equity Issue
- Understanding Rural Students
- Rural Student Challenges
- Supporting Rural Students
- Next Steps



Why are we talking about this?

The New York Times

Colleges Discover the Rural Student



By Laura Pappano
Jan. 31, 2017



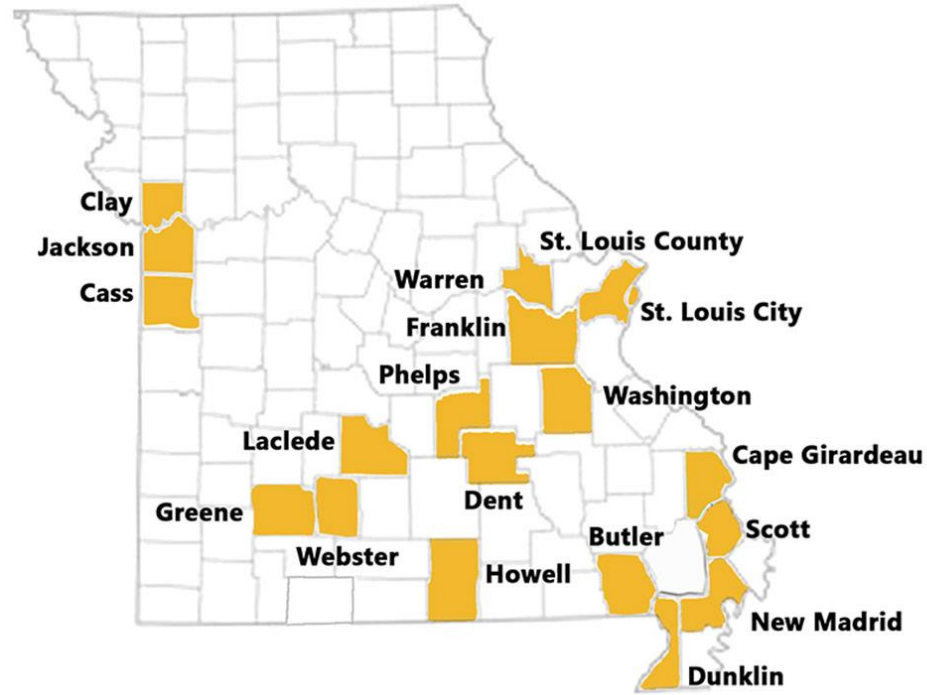
Why are we talking about this?



Missouri College Advising Corps™

Headquartered at the University of Missouri

2018-19 Partner High Schools



Why are we talking about this?



OZARKS TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Washington Post

Education

How to raise rural enrollment in higher education? Go local.

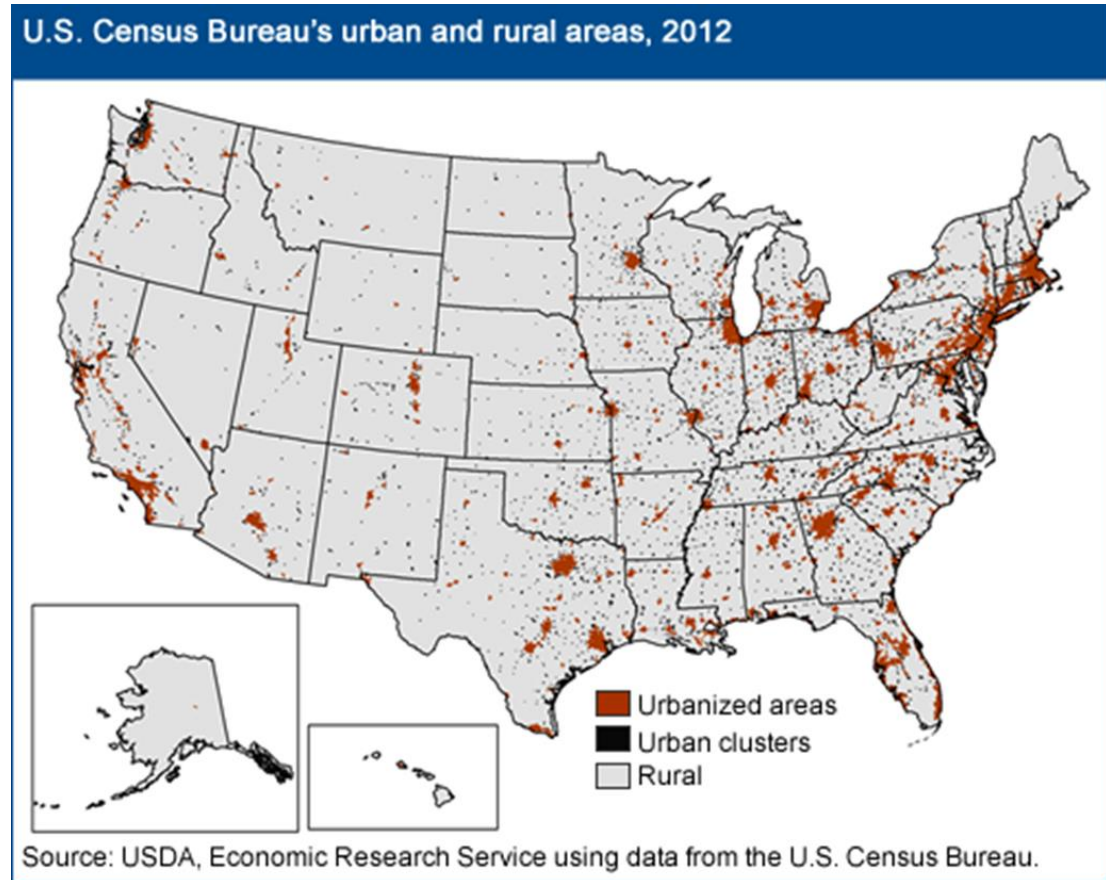
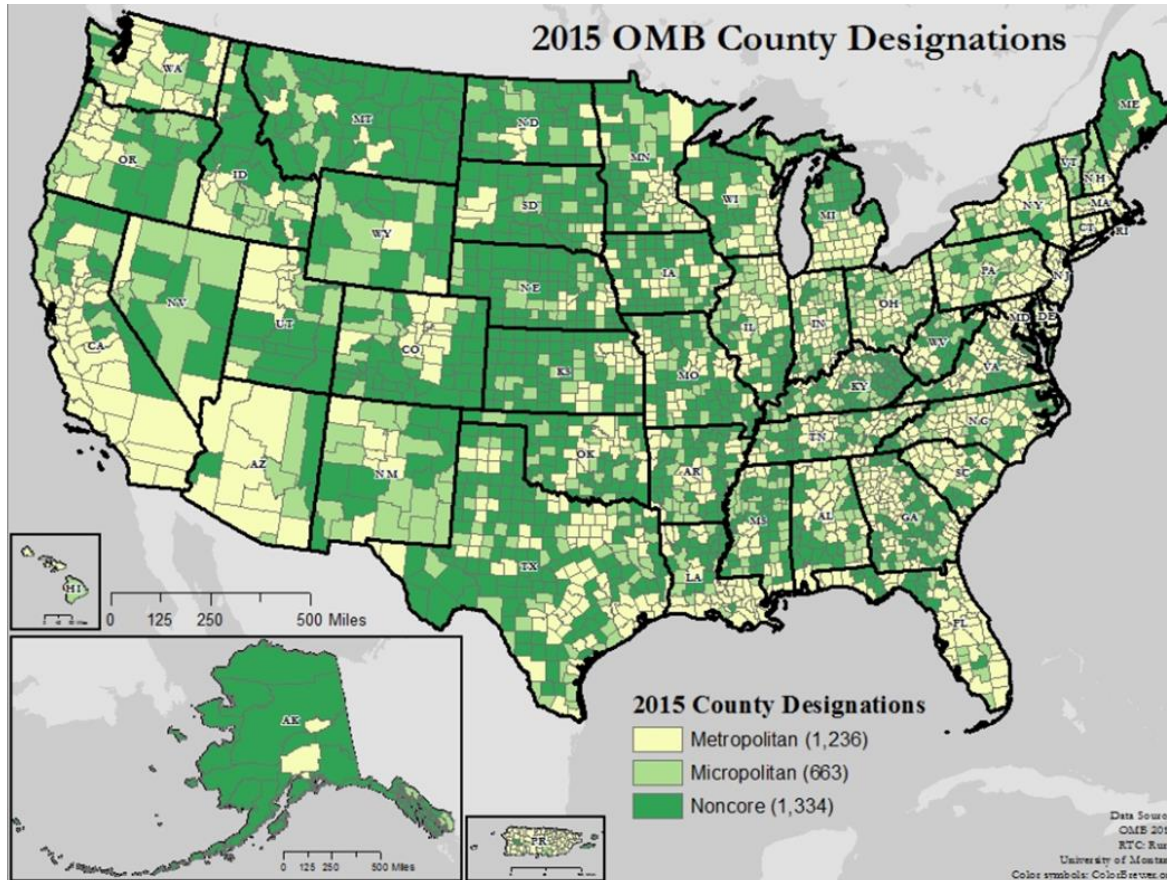




Understanding Rural Students

Understanding Rural Students

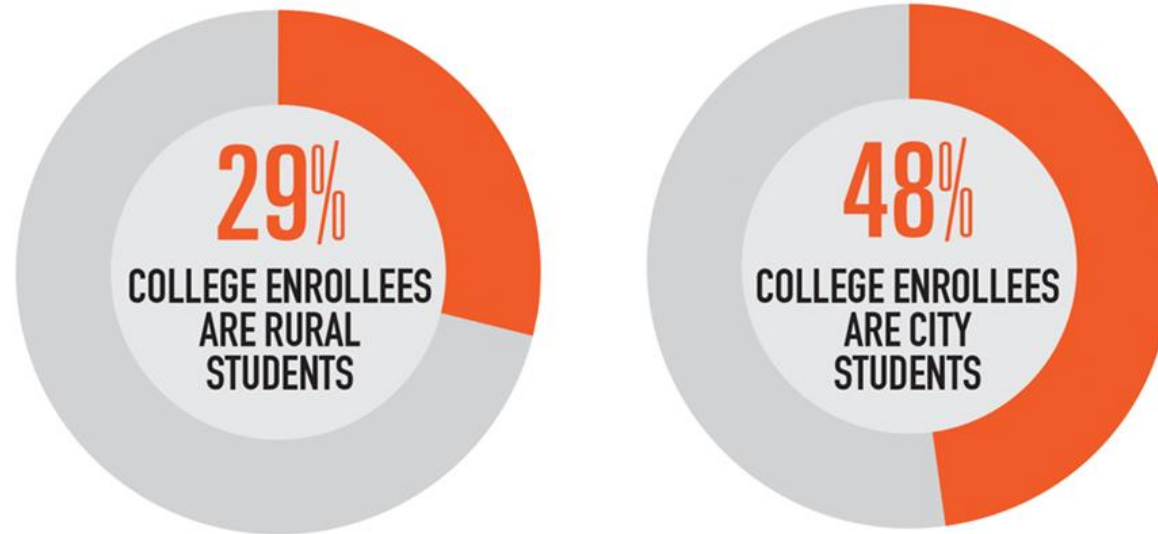
Roughly 97% of U.S. landmass and 23% of the U.S. population is "rural."



Understanding Rural Students

Rural students are underrepresented on college campuses.

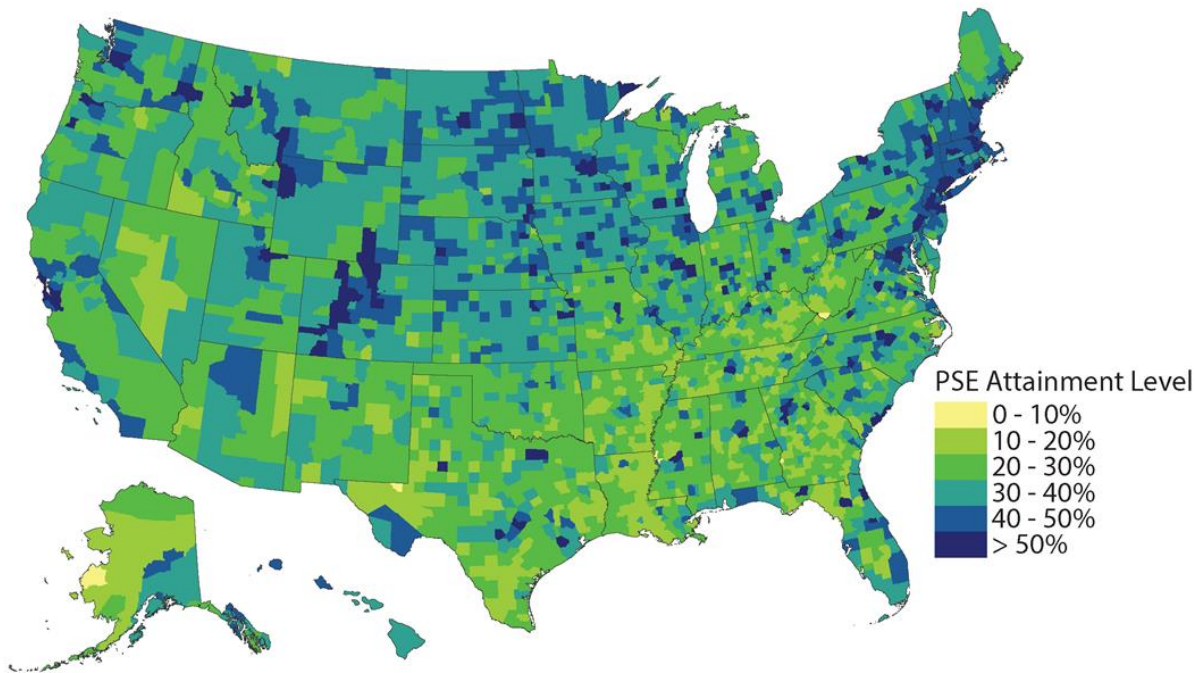
COLLEGE ATTAINMENT RURAL VS URBAN



SOURCE: NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS (NCES)

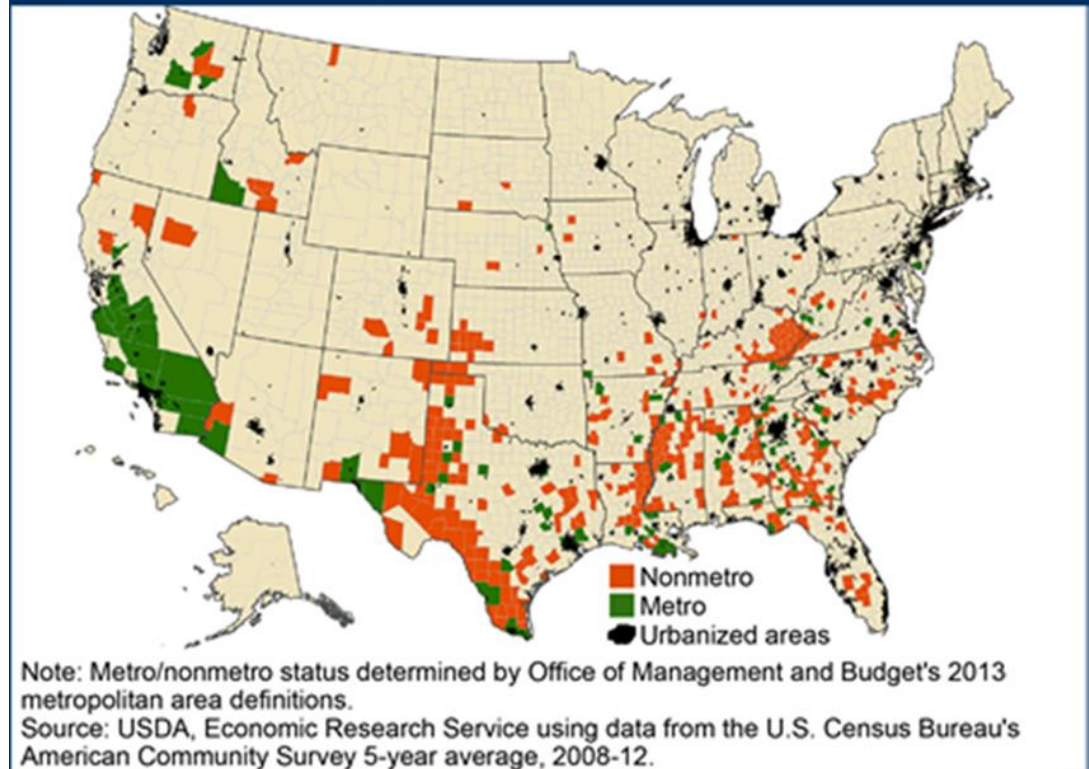
Understanding Rural Students

Rural regions have among the lowest educational attainment rates...



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2016). American Community Survey 2015 (5-year estimates).

Counties where 20 percent or more of adults 25-64 do not have a high school diploma/equivalent, 2008-12



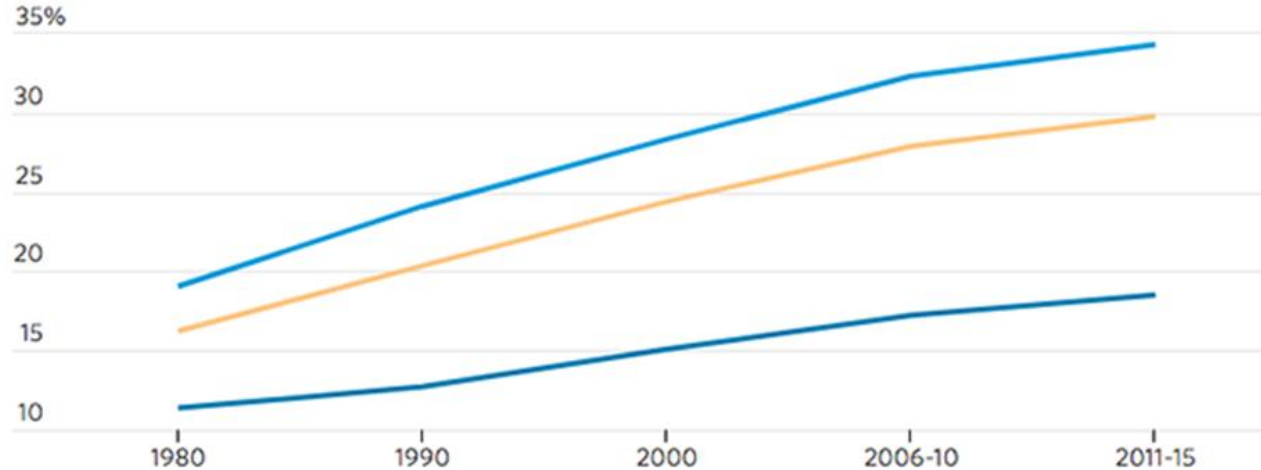
Understanding Rural Students

...and the urban/rural education gap appears to be getting worse.

A Matter of Degree

U.S. college-education rates have climbed by 15 percentage points since 2000, compared with 7 percentage points for rural areas. Percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher:

■ Rural ■ Urban/Suburban ■ U.S. average



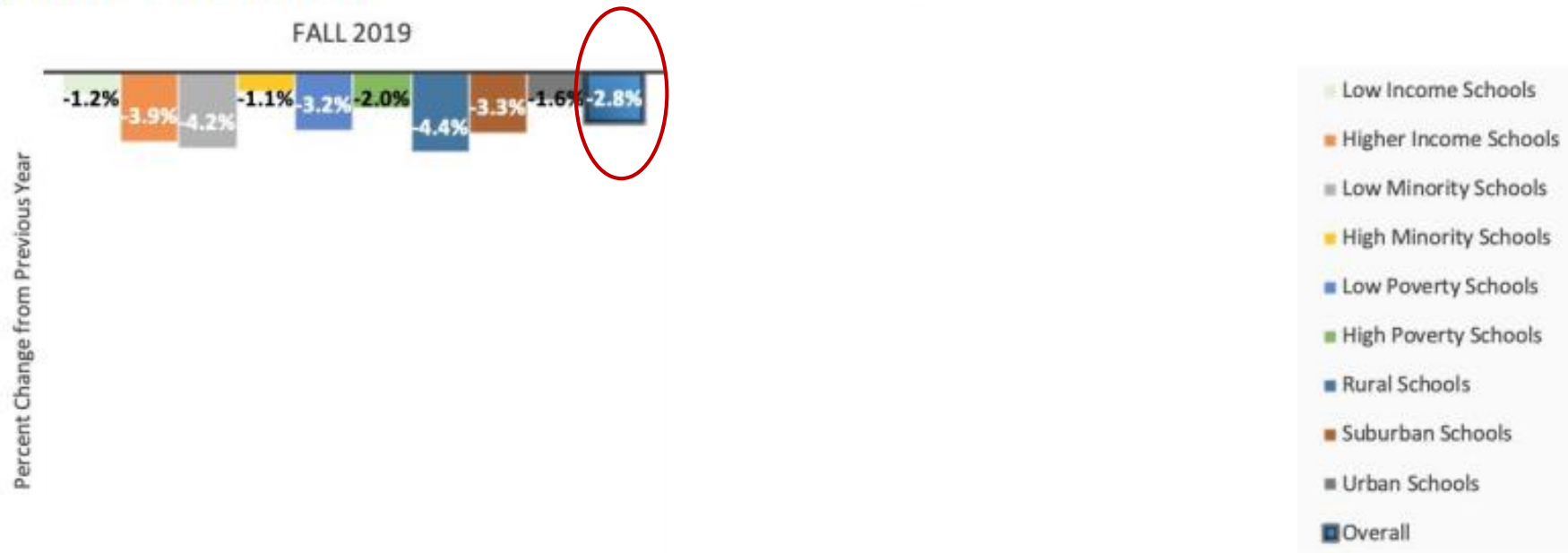
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Understanding Rural Students

COVID-19 has had a *massive* impact on college enrollment for rural students.

Figure 1. Changes in Number of Students Enrolling in College After High School by High School Characteristics

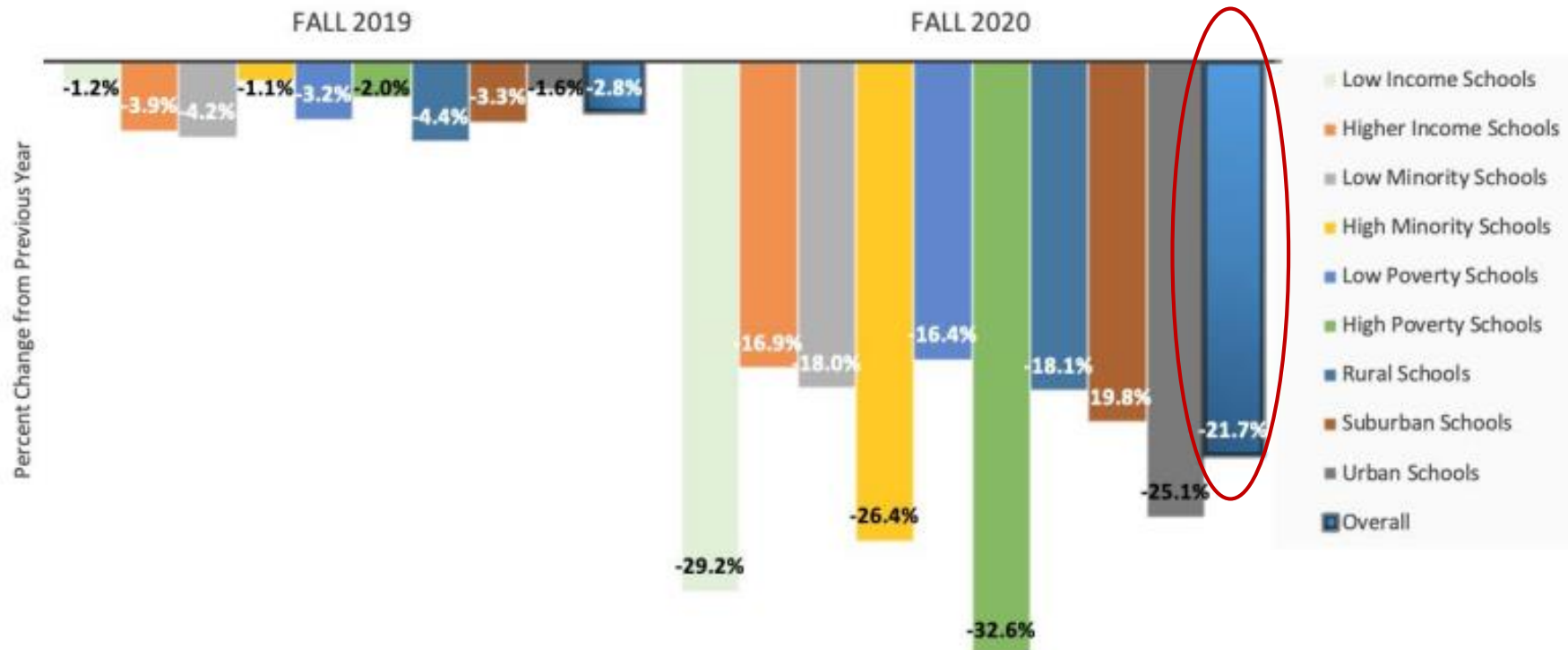


Source: NSC 2020 High School Benchmarks

Understanding Rural Students

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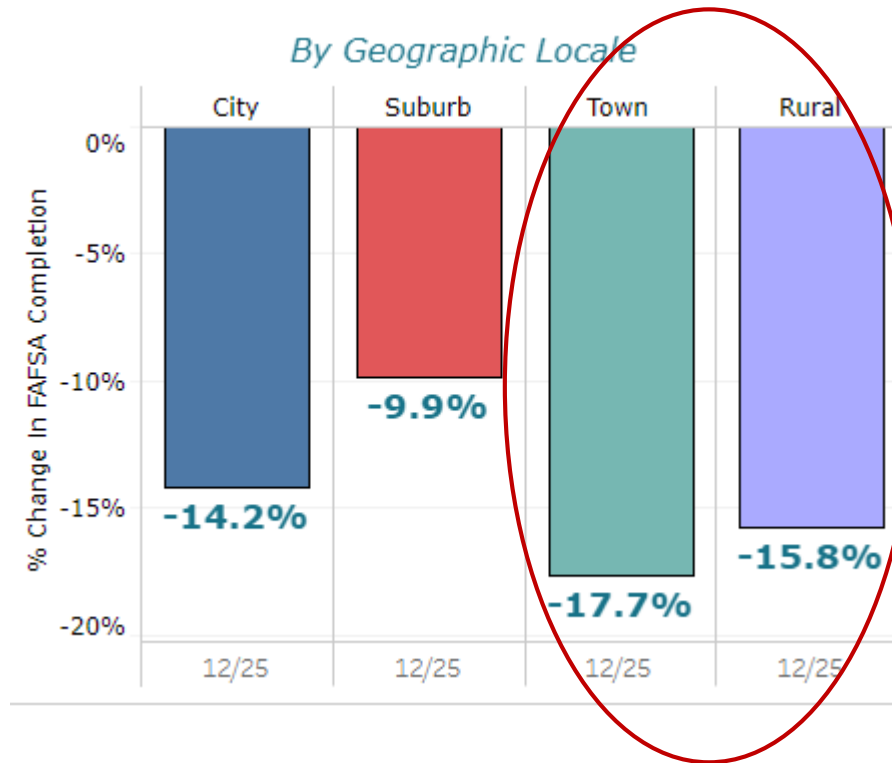


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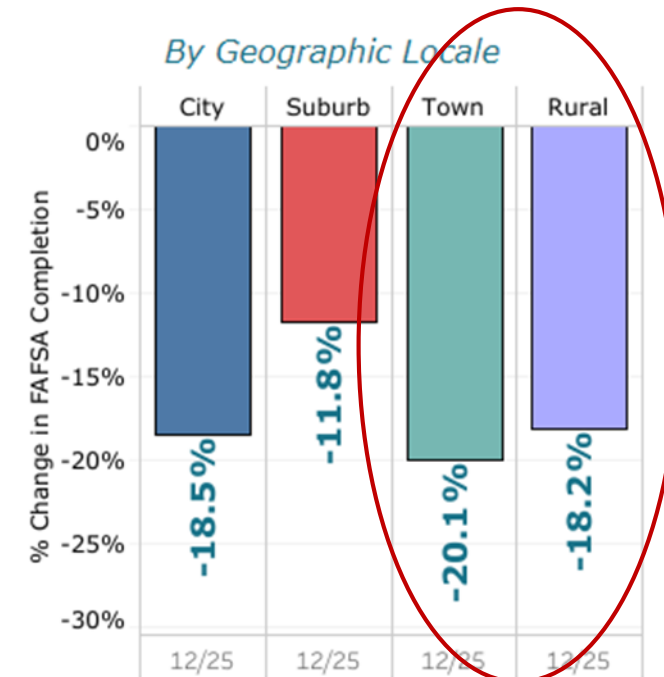
Understanding Rural Students

And FAFSA completion has dropped off considerably for 2020-2021.

% Change in FAFSA Completion Year-Over-Year by Selected Characteristics



National



Missouri

Understanding Rural Students

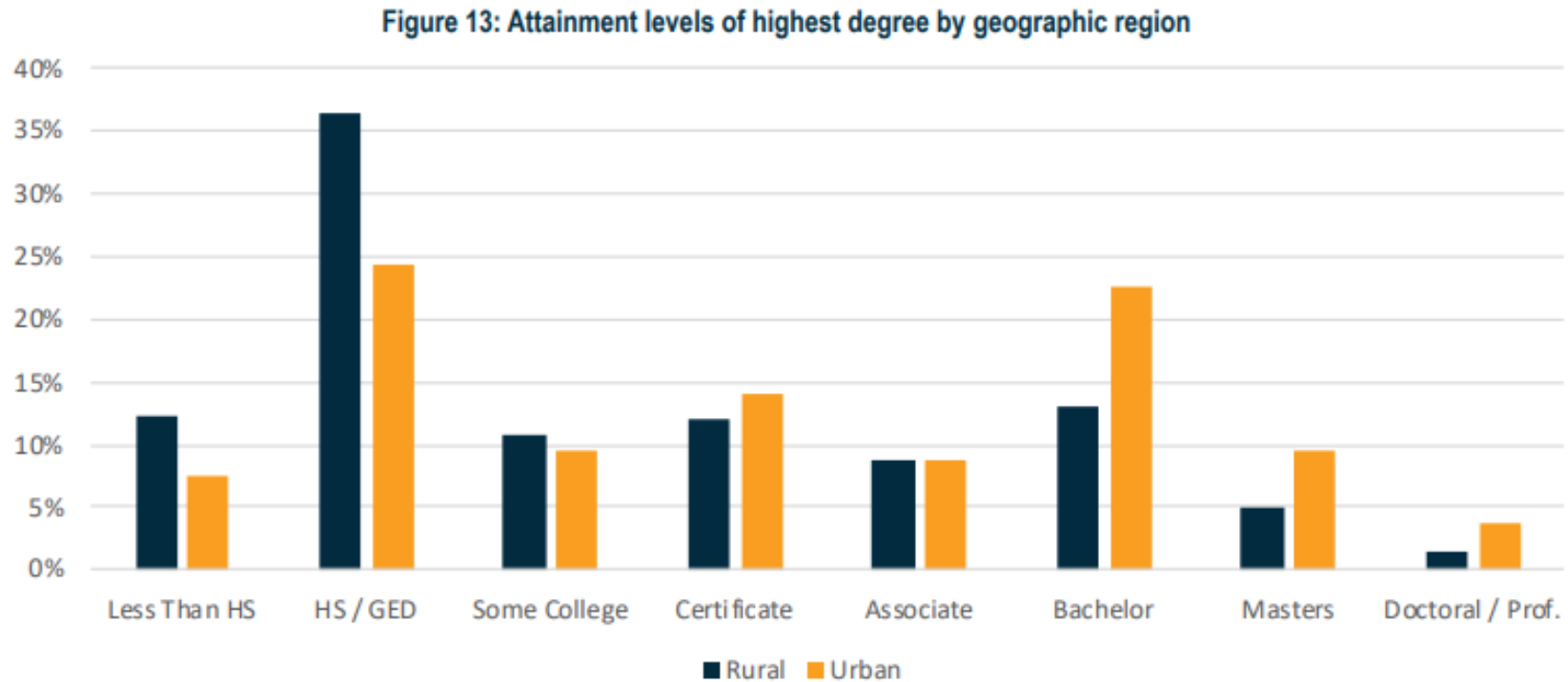
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State Profile: Missouri

Through **December 25, 2020**, **27.8%** of the high school class of 2021 in Missouri has completed a FAFSA. There have been **19,789** completions in Missouri, a **-14.7%** change compared to last academic year.

Missouri's Rural Students

Missouri's rural communities lag behind in degree attainment.

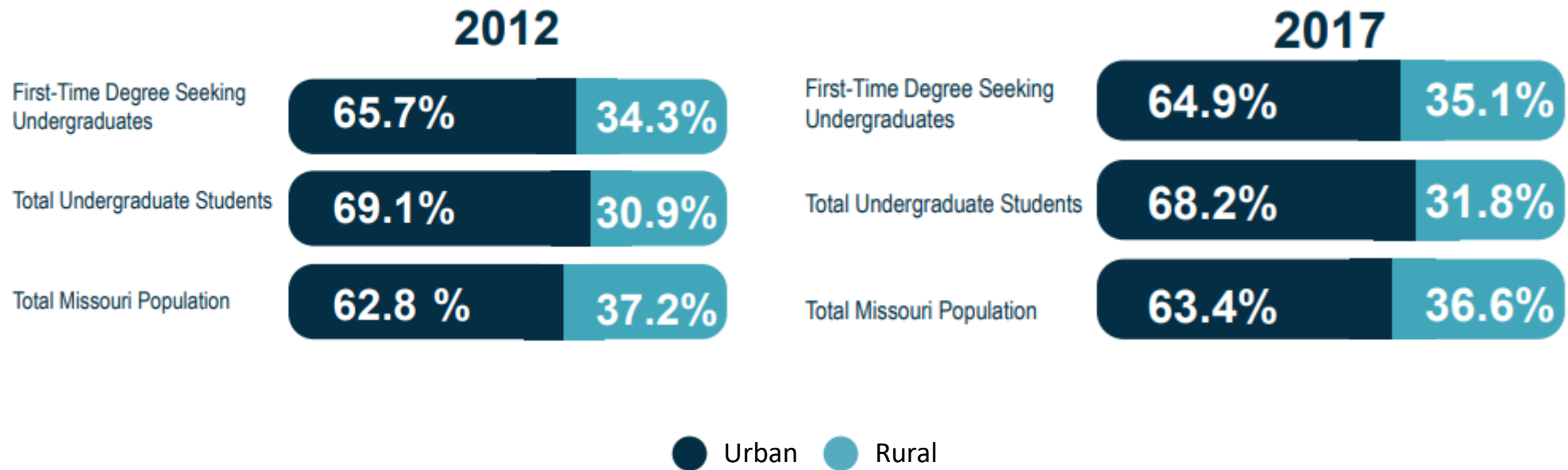


Source: ACS 5-year Estimates

Source: MDHEWD 2020 Equity Report

Missouri's Rural Students

Missouri's rural students are underrepresented in college...

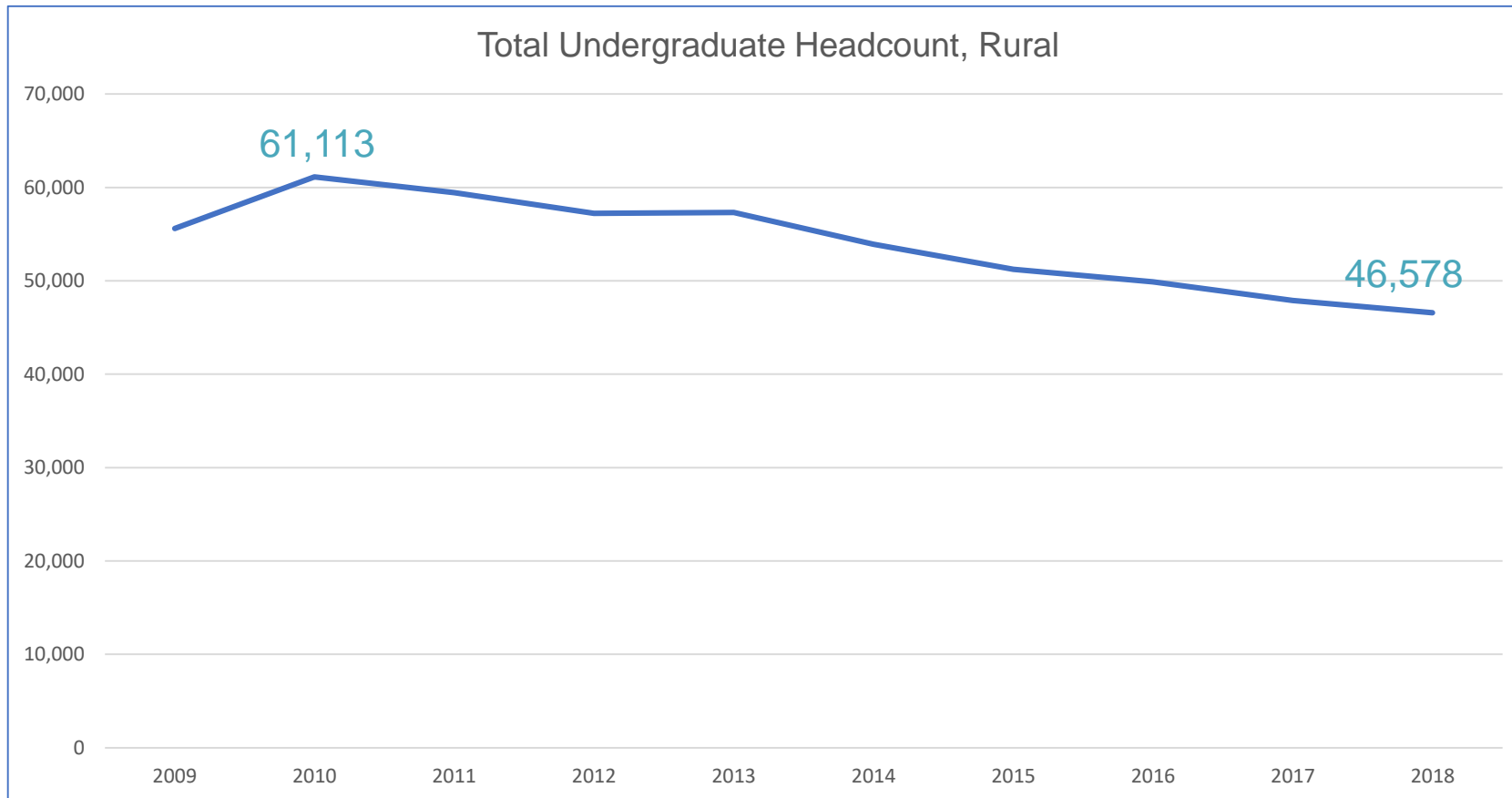


...and are overall *slightly poorer* and *more likely to be first-generation*.

Source: MDHEWD 2019 Equity Report

Missouri's Rural Students

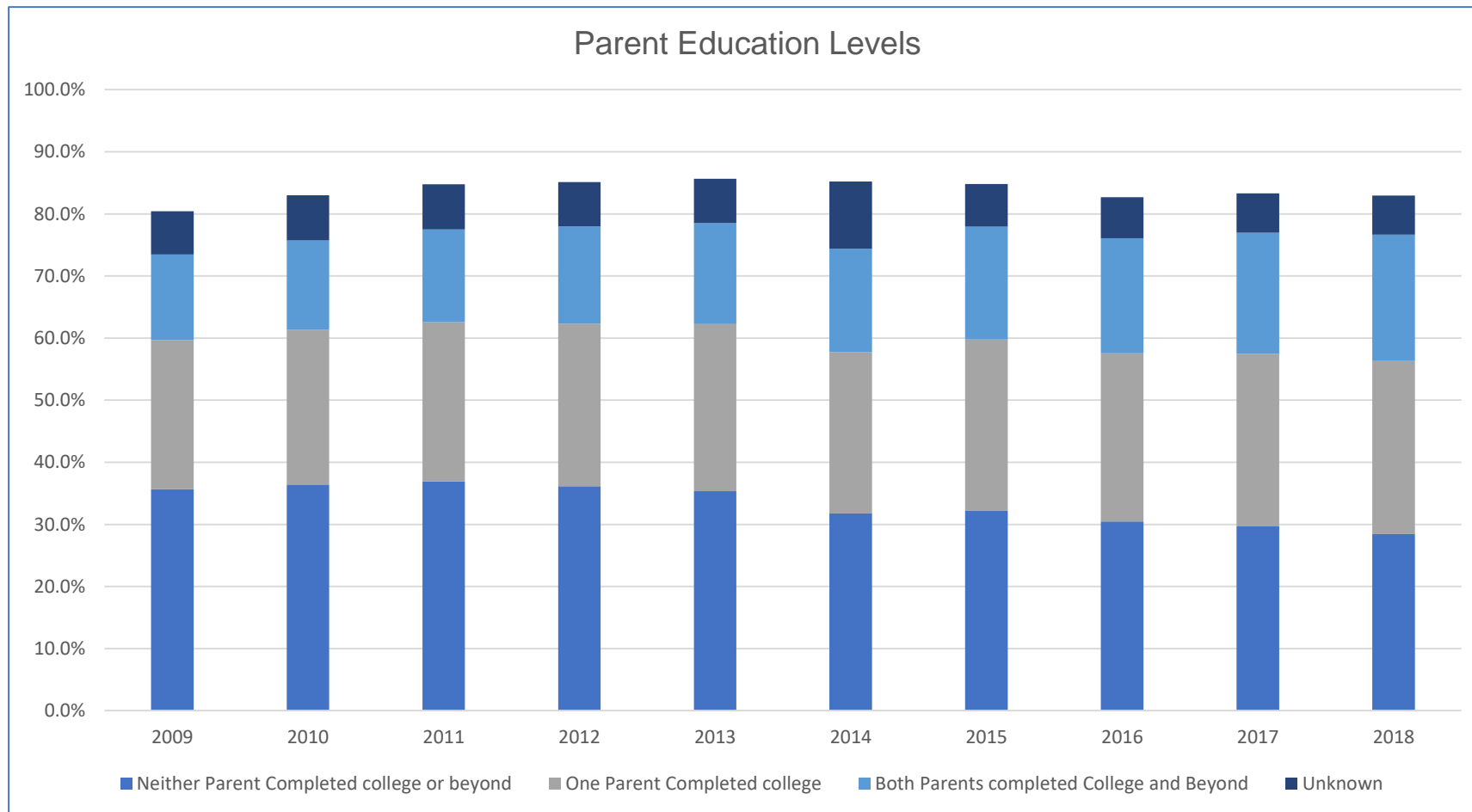
The population of rural students enrolled in college has been declining.



Source: MDHEWD data; shared 12/7/2020

Missouri's Rural Students

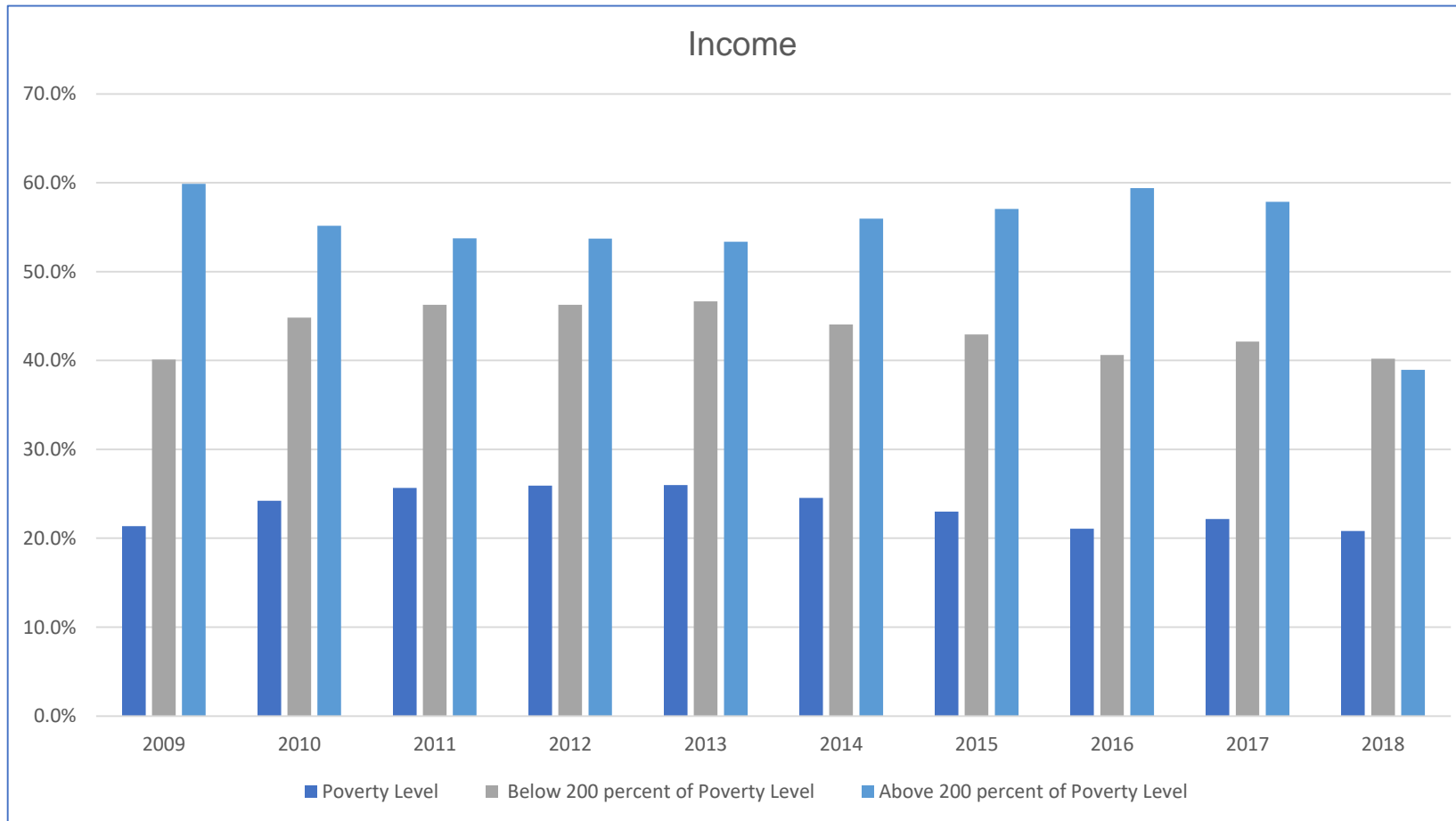
Rural students are much more likely to be first-generation.



Source: MDHEWD data; shared 12/7/2020

Missouri's Rural Students

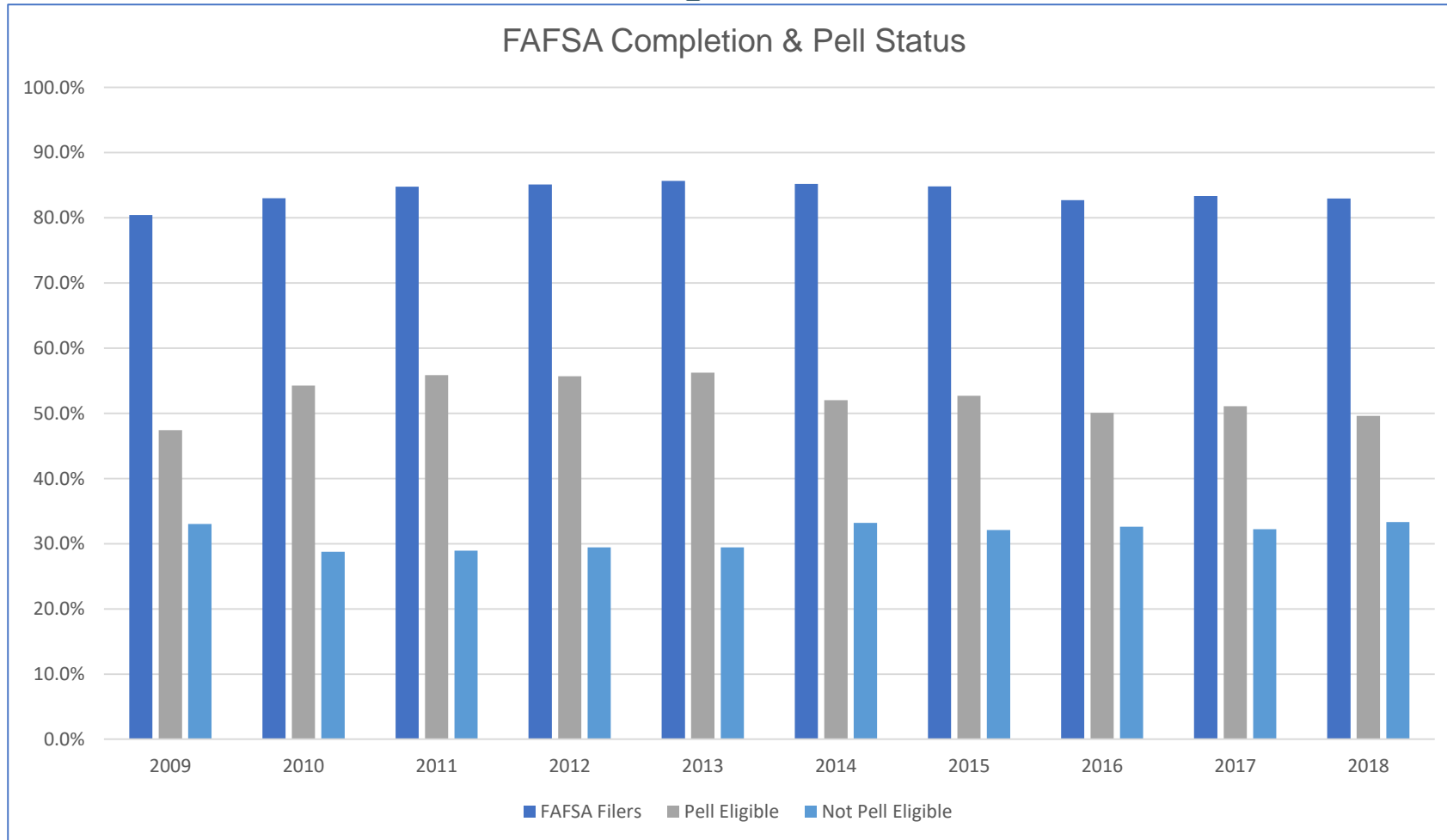
A large portion of rural students are at or below the poverty level.



Source: MDHEWD data; shared 12/7/2020

Missouri's Rural Students

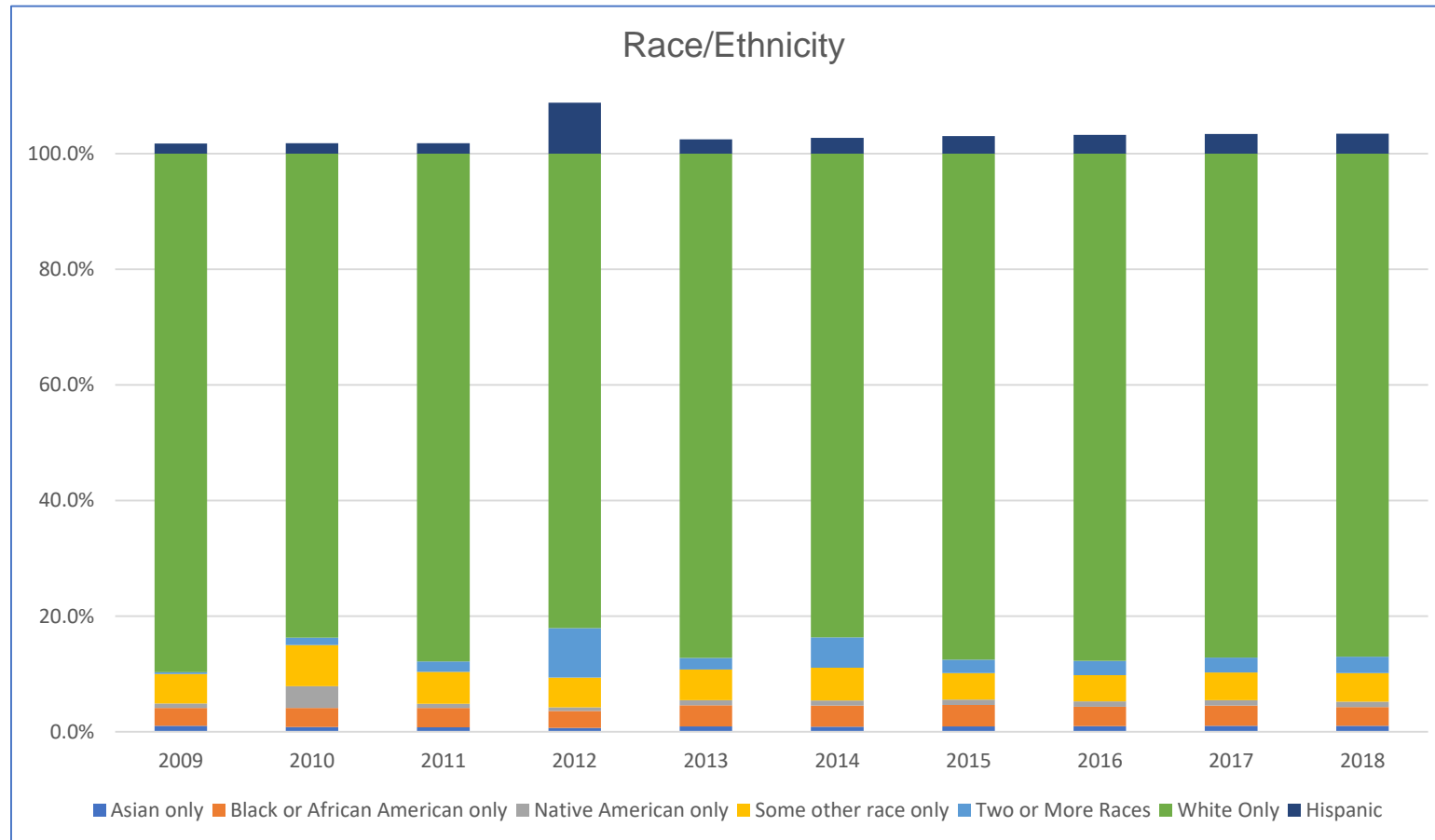
More than half of rural students are Pell-eligible.



Source: MDHEWD data; shared 12/7/2020

Missouri's Rural Students

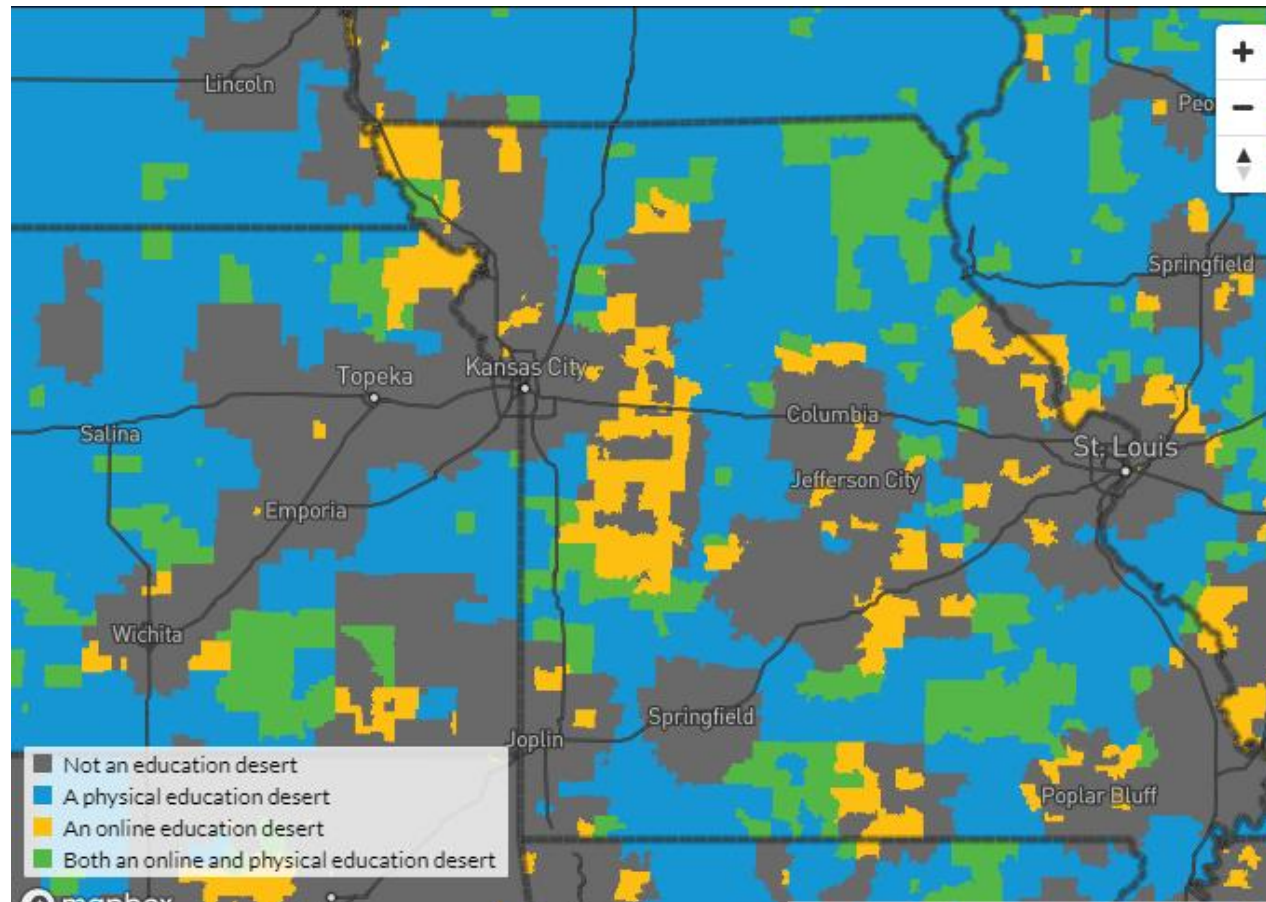
Rural students of color make up a solid portion of enrolled students.



Source: MDHEWD data; shared 12/7/2020

Missouri's Rural Students

Missouri rural students often live in broadband or education deserts – or sometimes both!



Source: [Urban Institute](#)

Missouri's Rural Students

Missouri Equity Report 2020 found several encouraging trends:

1. On-time and 150 percent-time graduation rates were nearly identical for rural and urban students
2. At two-year institutions, rural students were nearly twice as likely to graduate on-time
3. Rural students were more likely to enroll at a four-year institution after completing at a two-year institution
4. There was virtually no difference between rural and urban students pursuing graduate studies



Rural Student Challenges

Rural Student Challenges

Rural students often encounter systemic institutional barriers:

- Recruitment & Admissions
- Campus Culture
- Career Preparation



Rural Student Challenges

Recruitment & Admissions

- Inequitable recruiting practices that overlook rural students
- Limited high school visits from recruiters
- Scholarship criteria that value privilege over achievement
 - Rural high schools often lack AP, IB, or honors courses
- Standardized test-based admissions and scholarships
 - Rural students often don't have access to SAT/ACT tutors
- No options to substitute work/family obligations for volunteerism, clubs/activities, etc.

Rural Student Challenges

Campus Culture

- An invisible demographic on campus
 - Who are the rural students, faculty, and staff?
 - Where is the on-campus community?
- Independent learning vs. interdependent learning
- Large lecture halls and student-teacher distancing
- Political/ideological campus orthodoxy
- Increasing expectation on virtual learning and LMS
 - Remember: Lack of reliable internet access and broadband deserts

Rural Student Challenges

Career Preparation

- Urban-centered internships and capital-building
 - Limited or no options in rural/remote communities
- Selective employer networks and campus recruiting
 - Rural-based employers are not recruiting on campus
- Study abroad vs. study away
- “Professionalism” as classism





Supporting Rural Students

Supporting Rural Students

In order to better recruit, support, and retain rural students:

- Implement equitable recruitment strategies
 - Visit high schools and community colleges that seem “too far out of the way”
 - Develop trust and sustained engagement with students, counselors, and parents; community matters!
 - Provide up-to-date information and resources for counselors
 - Include currently enrolled rural students in recruitment efforts



Supporting Rural Students

In order to better recruit, support, and retain rural students:

- Create a sense of community on campus
 - Provide support throughout college, not just during matriculation
 - Develop “jargon” guides for parents and families
 - Create community spaces on campus
 - Use data and analytics to understand students’ progress toward graduation



Supporting Rural Students

In order to better recruit, support, and retain rural students:

- Be more accessible
 - Develop policies that account for geographic barriers (e.g., distance to campus, inclement weather, reliable transportation)
 - Implement flexible and part-time enrollment options that meet students' needs
 - Establish procedures and provide internet access for students with limited broadband at home



Supporting Rural Students

In order to better recruit, support, and retain rural students:

- Re-design career services with rural students in mind
 - Expand employer networks and industry connections
 - Identify rural-located internships and employer opportunities
 - Create an alumni network of rural students



Supporting Rural Students

Join the NACAC Rural & Small Town SIG

- Collection of 1,400+ professionals from admissions, schools, CBOs, and other orgs tackling rural college access
- Access to:
 - Monthly meetings featuring guest speakers
 - List of fly-in programs that are seeking rural students
 - Rural + High poverty list of 10,000+ schools
 - CBOs & SIG directory serving rural students



**RURAL
& SMALL
TOWN
NACAC SIG**

bit.ly/NACACRuralSIG

Supporting Rural Students

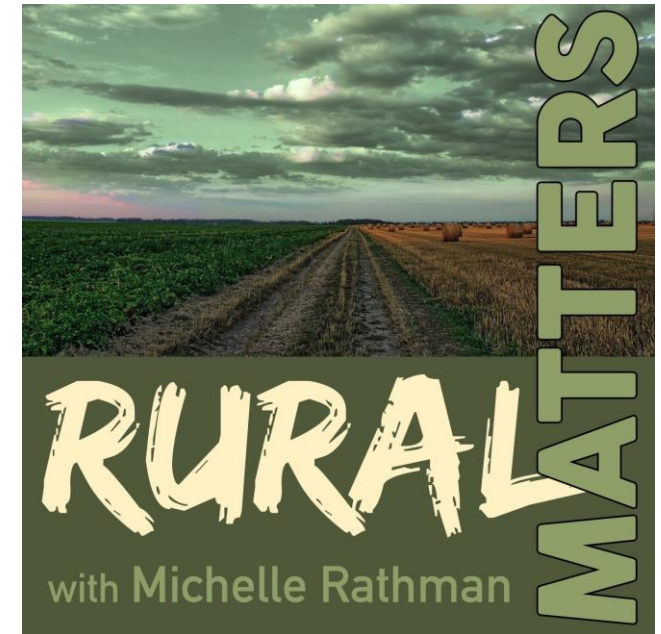
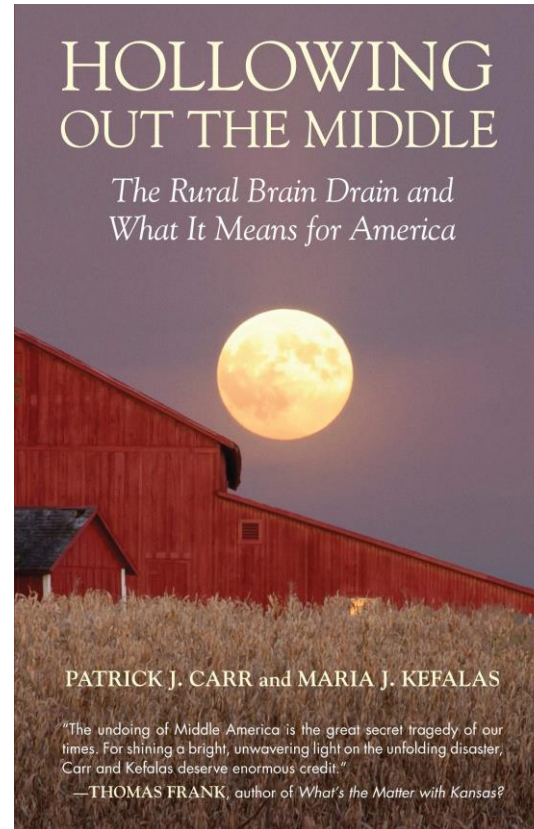
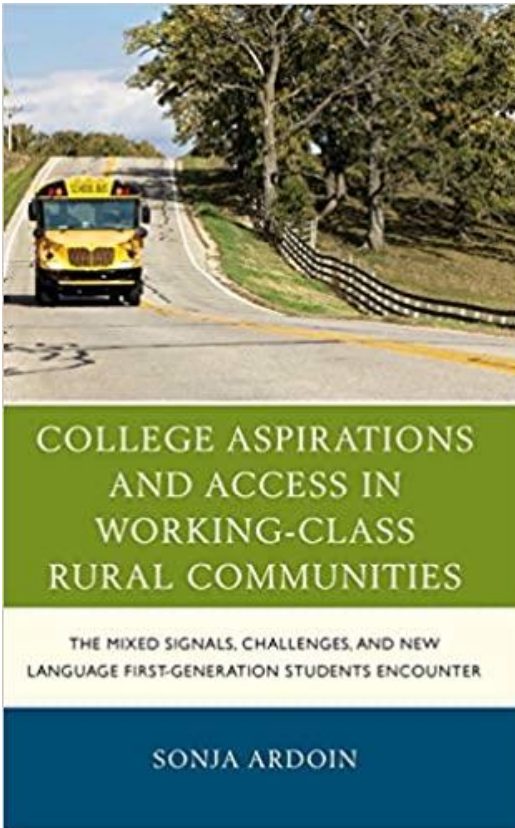
Institutional Examples:

- *Rural Student Services* at the University of Alaska Fairbanks
- *Rural U – Early College* at the University of Maine at Fort Kent
- *Emerging Rural Leaders* at the University of Chicago
- *Rural and Small Town Student Support* at Swarthmore College



Supporting Rural Students

Learning Opportunities:



Let's Stay Connected

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